

## Pitcher's Checklist

This time of year is very important time when it comes to the development of young pitchers. It seems as though most pitching injuries and most bad habits are developed early in the season. With that in mind, we wanted to arm you with The Pitcher's Checklist.

### The Pitcher's Checklist

- When watching a pitcher throw for the first time, it's important to look at whether the pitcher is throwing strikes, at velocity and at ball movement
- The fastball is the foundation for everything a pitcher does. You can't develop off-speed pitches without the arm strength gained by throwing a lot of fastballs at a young age.
- A pitching coach should first look at a pitcher's results before he starts breaking down the pitcher's mechanics.
- The grip is important in pitching, and the best grip for a particular pitch is the one that's most comfortable for the pitcher while allowing him to throw strikes and achieve maximum velocity and movement.
- The first pitch to introduce, especially to a young pitcher, is the four-seam fastball.
- Change-of-speed pitches should be prioritized over pitches that make the ball move.
- Pitching mechanics involve one continuous motion, but there are five links that make up that motion – footwork, balance position, power position, rotation and follow-through. If one of those links breaks down the entire chain can be affected.
- Encourage young pitchers to keep their eyes on the target. The longer a pitcher sees the catcher's mitt, the more likely it is that he is going to throw a strike.
- The most important thing for off-speed pitches is to make sure that the ball is comfortable in the pitcher's hand.

## Pitcher's Checklist *(continue)*

- Coaches should not let young pitchers fall in love with their off-speed pitches and to throw them too often.
- Once the pitcher releases the ball, he's no longer a pitcher. He's a fielder. A pitcher fields a ground ball just like any other infielder: wide base, butt down, hands out in front.
- On a ball to the right side, a pitcher's first instinct should be to move toward first base.
- A pitcher who comes to the set position and goes to the plate the same way every time is easy to steal on. He should change his timing and pattern when throwing to the plate and vary the type and quality of his pickoff moves.

We hope these guidelines are helpful as you work with your young pitchers this season. Good luck!

**By Cal and Bill Ripken with John Habyan**